

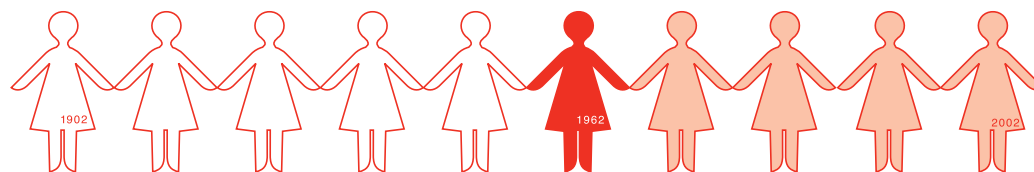


NSW GOVERNMENT

**ACTION PLAN FOR ABORIGINAL AND
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WOMEN**

2002–2004

equality families justice education violence work safety power leadership training communities health



100 YEARS OF SUFFRAGE

**NSW GOVERNMENT ACTION PLAN FOR
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WOMEN**



**This booklet provides an overview of
NSW Government plans and actions
for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.**

**The information in the booklet
is taken from the
NSW Government Action Plan
for Women 2002–2004.**

Introduction

New South Wales is home to more Aboriginal women than any other State or Territory of Australia. While the largest concentration of Aboriginal people in the State (and indeed in Australia) is in Sydney, Aboriginal people in NSW live in communities ranging from urban to rural or remote, and from modern to traditional in their beliefs and practices. Some Aboriginal women still live on their traditional lands, while a history of colonisation and dispossession means many more have no access to the traditional lands of their ancestors.

Aboriginal women suffer from extremely high levels of disadvantage across a range of socio-economic indicators. They typically experience poor health, lower life expectancy, poverty and poor living conditions, poor educational outcomes, high levels of unemployment and severe levels of family violence.

These experiences are examples of the devastating long-term effects of European colonisation. For Aboriginal people, white settlement was accompanied by hardship, brutality and violence. Australia's many indigenous nations were dispossessed of their land, traditional law, culture and language. The widespread practice of child removal was particularly devastating, a history that has only recently begun to be acknowledged by non-Aboriginal Australians. These experiences, many of which were the direct and deliberate effect of government policies and practices, have left permanent scars for Aboriginal people and communities.

For Aboriginal women, all these factors combine to impact severely on their ability to exercise and enjoy their basic human rights, achieve high levels of social and economic participation, and achieve success and influence in their chosen spheres.

The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's Report, *Overcoming Disadvantage*, provides tables showing that there have been significant improvement in health and education for indigenous Australians over the last thirty years, including in relation to attendance at school, having a post-school qualification, staying at school to final year, undertaking traineeships and apprenticeships, enrolling in higher education, working in professional and managerial occupations, having access to electricity, perinatal mortality, and life expectancy.¹ Levels of infant mortality declined dramatically in the 1970s, attributable largely to improvements in community infrastructure and intensive indigenous health programs which focused on maternal and child health.²

Despite the disadvantages they face however, Aboriginal women play vital roles in their families and communities, and in the broader community. They are active as workers and leaders in their communities and in caring for and supporting their families. Furthermore, Aboriginal women can often be found at the forefront of the numerous struggles for social justice and self-determination that seek to improve the lives of indigenous Australians.

Indigenous women in New South Wales

According to the 2001 census, there are 410,003 people (201,988 men and boys and 208,015 women and girls) in Australia who identify as being of indigenous origin.³ This represents 2.2 per cent of the total Australian population.

The largest proportion of indigenous people (119,865 people, or 29 per cent) live in NSW.⁴ Indigenous people make up 1.9 per cent of the total NSW population.⁵ The NSW indigenous population includes 60,294 (or 50.3 per cent) women and girls.⁶

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BREAKDOWN

The NSW indigenous population is made up of those people who are of Aboriginal origin (112,188 people), those who are of Torres Strait Islander origin (4,222 people) and those who share both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origins (3,455 people).⁷

In other words, the indigenous population of NSW comprises 93.6 per cent Aboriginal people, 3.8 per cent Torres Strait Islanders and 3.1 per cent people who share both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origins.⁸ While Queensland is home to the largest proportion of Torres Strait Islanders (58 per cent), NSW is home to 18 per cent of all Torres Strait Islanders in Australia.⁹

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF NSW INDIGENOUS POPULATION

The largest numbers of indigenous residents are found in urban areas. The Sydney Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) region¹⁰ recorded the highest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (37,557 indigenous residents) in Australia.¹¹

Three of the top four ATSIC regions with the highest number of indigenous residents are in NSW. Sydney has 37,557 indigenous residents, followed by Brisbane (34,809 indigenous residents), Coffs Harbour (32,122), and Wagga Wagga (20,966).¹² These three ATSIC regions are home to 74.6 per cent of the indigenous residents of NSW, and 22.1 per cent of all indigenous people in Australia.¹³ The other NSW ATSIC regions are Tamworth (with 12,690 indigenous residents), Queanbeyan (10,951) and Bourke (7,298).

While the largest *numbers* of indigenous residents in NSW live in Sydney, the NSW ATSIC regions with the highest *proportion*

of indigenous residents are rural areas, namely Bourke, where 14 per cent of residents are indigenous, Tamworth (6.5 per cent) and Wagga Wagga (4.1 per cent).

Within the most populous ATSIC region of Sydney, the most populous indigenous areas are on the southern outskirts, including Wollongong (2,659 indigenous residents), Kiama/Shellharbour (1,412), Liverpool (2,030), Campbelltown surrounds (1,262) and Bankstown (1,218).¹⁴

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION

Two characteristics mark the indigenous population, both Australia-wide and in NSW. Firstly it is relatively *young* compared to the non-indigenous population, and secondly, it is a rapidly *growing* population. The indigenous population of NSW (and Australia) has a markedly younger age structure than the non-indigenous population. For example, 57.7 per cent of indigenous people in NSW are aged 24 years or younger, compared to 33.7 per cent of the non-indigenous population.¹⁵ The figures for indigenous women and girls in NSW are similar, with 55.9 per cent aged 24 years or younger, compared to 32 per cent of non-indigenous women and girls.¹⁶ Of all indigenous women in NSW, 38.8 per cent are aged less than 15 years, compared to 19.5 per cent of non-indigenous women.¹⁷

Reflecting their significantly shorter life expectancy, there are relatively few older indigenous women. For example, while indigenous women and girls make up 1.9 per cent of the total population of NSW women, they make up only 0.4 per cent of those over 65 years old. Only 3.2 per cent of indigenous women are aged 65 years and over, compared to 14.4 per cent of non-indigenous women.¹⁸

Australia-wide and in every state and territory, the indigenous population is growing rapidly compared to the total population. While Australia's total population has increased by 13 per cent since 1991 and 6.0 per cent since 1996, the indigenous population has increased by 55 per cent since 1991 and by 16 per cent since 1996.¹⁹ This 16 per cent increase in the indigenous population of Australia between 1996 and 2001 comprises 'natural increase' (births minus deaths) and people newly identifying themselves as indigenous on the Census form. ABS states that 12 per cent of the increase is due to natural increase and a further 4 per cent 'primarily due to an increasing propensity for persons to be identified as indigenous on Census forms'.²⁰

In NSW the total population has increased by 5.5 per cent since 1996 and by 11 per cent since 1991. In comparison, the NSW indigenous population has increased by 18 per cent since 1996 and by 71 per cent since 1991.²¹ This means that the number of people in NSW identified as indigenous in the 2001 census increased by 18,380 people (9,506 men and 8,874 women) since 1996, and by 49,866 people (24,926 men and 24,940 women) since 1991.²² While the overall intercensal increase between 1996 and 2001 for the indigenous population of NSW was 5.5 per cent, some parts of the State recorded much higher increases. The highest intercensal regional increases²³ in NSW occurred in the ATSI regions of Coffs Harbour (30 per cent—also the highest in Australia), Queanbeyan (23 per cent) and Tamworth (20 per cent).

Just 788 people or less than 1 per cent of indigenous people in NSW reported speaking an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language. This is significantly lower than in Australia as a whole, where indigenous languages were spoken by 12.1 per cent of indigenous Australians.²⁴

ISSUES AND CURRENT STATUS

Housing

Compared to non-indigenous people, indigenous people are much less likely to own or be paying off their own home. Of all indigenous households in Australia in 1999²⁵, 12.8 per cent were owned outright and 26 per cent were owner-occupied with a mortgage. This total of 38.8 per cent compares with 70.7 per cent of non-indigenous homes that were owner occupied (39.3 per cent owned outright, and 31.4 per cent with a mortgage).

Indigenous households are twice as likely to be renting as non-indigenous households (58.2 per cent compared to 26.7 per cent). Of indigenous rental households, most are renting from either a private landlord (46.9 per cent) or a State or Territory housing authority (38.5 per cent). Of non-indigenous households a large majority is rented from private landlords (75.6 per cent) and a much smaller proportion (17.9 per cent) is rented from State or Territory housing authorities.²⁶

For both indigenous and non-indigenous people, the rate of home ownership increased with age, however, this trend was more obvious in non-indigenous households, where 75 per cent of reference persons aged 55 and over were owners without a mortgage, compared to 37 per cent for indigenous households.²⁷

Housing costs²⁸ are slightly higher for indigenous households, who spend a higher proportion of their income on housing than non-indigenous households. For example, 23 per cent of indigenous households spend more than a quarter of their income on housing, compared to 18 per cent of non-indigenous households. Compared to non-indigenous households, indigenous households are also more likely to be in serious need of repair²⁹, and more likely to be overcrowded.³⁰

Family type

Indigenous families are twice as likely as other families³¹ to be one-parent families with children (31.4 per cent of indigenous families in occupied private dwellings), compared to just 15.1 per cent of other families. Couple families with children make up a similar proportion of indigenous (45.8 per cent) and non-indigenous (47.9 per cent) families.³² Couples with no children account for a higher proportion of non-indigenous families (35.2 per cent) than indigenous families (20.6 per cent).

Education

Of the 15,606 indigenous girls aged 5 to 14 years in NSW in 2001, 90 per cent were recorded as attending school, compared with 94.7 per cent of non-indigenous girls in this age group.³³ For young people aged 15–19 years in NSW, 56.3 per cent of indigenous girls were recorded as attending school compared with 76.2 per cent of non-indigenous girls in this age group.³⁴ Attendance rates for all groups are slightly higher in NSW than for Australia as a whole. Of the 108,069 indigenous children aged 5 to 14 years in Australia in 2001, 87 per cent were recorded as attending school, compared with 92 per cent of all children in this age group. For those aged 15–19 years, 46 per cent of indigenous young people were recorded as attending school compared with 70 per cent of all Australians in this age group.

Indigenous women in NSW generally have lower levels of education than non-indigenous women. Of women aged 15 years and over, year 8 or below was the highest level of schooling completed for 14 per cent of indigenous women (compared to 8.9 per cent of non-indigenous women). 30.5 per cent of indigenous women reported Year 10 as their highest level of schooling completed (compared to 28 per cent of non-

indigenous women). Just 17.3 per cent of indigenous women had completed Year 12 (compared to 39.3 per cent of non-indigenous women).³⁵ These NSW completion rates are very similar to those for women in Australia as a whole, where 17.9 per cent of indigenous women had completed Year 12, compared with 39.5 per cent of non-indigenous women.³⁶ While they have much lower completion rates than non-indigenous women (and men), slightly more indigenous women tend to complete their schooling than indigenous men.³⁷

Employment

Indigenous women face specific challenges in the labour market and their levels of participation in paid work are lower than the rates for non-indigenous women, for indigenous men and for non-indigenous men. Labour market disadvantages in turn bring reduced economic independence and lower standards of living for indigenous women, their families and communities. Indigenous women's access to employment is affected by culturally insensitive and discriminatory workplaces and work practices; levels of education; health status; rates and history of convictions and imprisonment; regional and remote residence; lack of access to capital and markets; and limited access to business skills and networks. Compared to the non-indigenous population, the indigenous population has a lower employment to population ratio, a markedly higher rate of unemployment, and a lower labour force participation rate.

In February 2000 there were 134,600 indigenous people in the Australian labour force, 110,900 in employment and 23,700 unemployed. Overall 44 per cent of the indigenous population aged 15 and over were employed, compared to an employment to population ratio of 59 per cent for non-indigenous people. The unemployment rate was 17.6 per cent

for indigenous people, compared with 7.3 per cent for non-indigenous people. The labour force participation rate³⁸ was 52.9 per cent for indigenous people and 63.7 per cent for non-indigenous people.³⁹

There has been some recent improvement in relation to unemployment for indigenous people. While indigenous unemployment rates remain higher than those for the non-indigenous population, unemployment for both groups has fallen in recent years, and indigenous unemployment rates have fallen faster. Indigenous unemployment, while fluctuating, recorded an overall fall from 27.8 per cent in 1994 to 17.6 per cent in 2000. Non-indigenous unemployment over that period fell steadily but less dramatically from 10.6 per cent in 1994 to 7.3 per cent in 2000. With an increasing indigenous population, however, the indigenous workforce is growing faster than the overall Australian workforce. If the supply of employment for indigenous people does not increase proportionately, indigenous unemployment will increase.

Health

The causes of the poor health of Aboriginal people are complex. In its 1988 Australia-wide assessment of Aboriginal health, the *Health Targets and Implementation Committee (Health for All)* concluded, however, that the social and economic disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal people were of central importance. These social and economic disadvantages, directly related to Aboriginal dispossession, and characterised by poverty and powerlessness, are reflected in measures of education, employment, income and housing.⁴⁰

In 1998–2000, life expectancy for Aboriginal women was 63 years—20 years less than for non-indigenous women. This life expectancy at the turn of the 21st century is similar to that

experienced by non-indigenous women in 1920–22.⁴¹ In 1998–2000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women at all ages had higher age-specific death rates⁴² compared with the total population. In the younger age groups (under 30 years) and among those aged 65 years and over, death rates for indigenous people were approximately four times those of the total population. Between the ages of 30 and 64 years, the death rates of indigenous Australians were around seven times those of the total population in those age groups.⁴³

Much of the difference between indigenous and non-indigenous life expectancy is often attributed to the excessive infant mortality rates among Aboriginal peoples. However, it is deaths in adulthood that account for most of this difference. While the death rate for indigenous infants is approximately four times the rate for the total population, these higher infant mortality rates account for only 1 year of the 20 year difference in life expectancy between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women. It is higher death rates in adulthood, especially between the ages of 45 and 65 years that account for most of the difference in life expectancy for indigenous people. In the period 1998–2000 for example, deaths of indigenous women aged 25 years and over accounted for 17 years of the 20 year difference in life expectancy between indigenous and non-indigenous women.⁴⁴ For women, indigenous deaths in the 65 years and over age group accounted for the largest part (8 years) of the difference between indigenous and non-indigenous women's life expectancy.

Diseases of the circulatory system or cardiovascular diseases⁴⁵ are the leading cause of death for Aboriginal people. These diseases accounted for 29.8 per cent of all indigenous deaths in 1998–2000. In this period, deaths from cardiovascular disease among Aboriginal women were 4.7 times higher than would be expected if indigenous women experienced the same

age-specific death rates as non-indigenous women. Not only are Aboriginal women more likely to die from cardiovascular diseases, they also tend to die from these diseases at a younger age compared to non-Aboriginal women. The median age of death from this cause was 65 years for Aboriginal women, compared to 84 years for all women.⁴⁶ Risk factors contributing to the high rates of cardiovascular disease among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women include high rates of smoking, obesity and diabetes. Indigenous Australians experience particularly high rates of rheumatic heart disease—around 20 times higher than the rate among the total population in 1998–2000. Rheumatic heart disease is often associated with poor infection control arising from conditions such as overcrowding, poor hygiene and scabies infestation.⁴⁷

The second leading cause of death for Aboriginal people is 'external causes', such as accidents, poisonings, suicide and violence. Deaths from these causes accounted for 16 per cent of the 1,613 deaths of indigenous people in 1998–2000, compared to 6 per cent of deaths in the total population, where external causes were the fourth leading cause of death.⁴⁸ As a proportion of these indigenous deaths, suicide accounted for 4.3 per cent (compared to 2 per cent in the total population), transport accidents 4.2 per cent (1.6 per cent) and assault 2 per cent (0.2 per cent).⁴⁹ Among indigenous women in this period, there were 4.7 times more deaths than would have been expected from age specific death rates in the total population of Australian women.⁵⁰ External causes were the second leading cause of death for indigenous Australians in this period, and the fourth for the total population.⁵¹

Cancer is the third leading cause of death for Aboriginal people. In 1998–2000 cancer caused nearly 15 per cent of

all deaths of indigenous peoples. While cancer rates among indigenous people are higher than for the total population, the mortality ratio of 2.5 for women is lower than for other leading causes of death. However, for some types of cancer, the difference is particularly marked—for instance, between 1992 and 1994, the mortality rate from cervical cancer was more than eight times that of non-indigenous women.⁵²

Other major causes of death for indigenous women include diseases of the respiratory system (deaths of indigenous women were at six times the rate of other women), and endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases (mortality ratio of 14.2). The vast majority of these deaths were caused by diabetes, which indigenous people are over 12 times more likely to suffer from than the total population.⁵³

Computer and internet use

Indigenous people are much less likely than non-indigenous people to use a computer at home. While almost half (43.4 per cent) of non-indigenous people in NSW reported using a computer at home, only 21.7 per cent of indigenous people did so, with three-quarters (75.7 per cent) reporting that they did not.⁵⁴ As the ABS points out, this disparity is even more significant given the fact that computer usage is generally more prevalent amongst younger age groups, and the indigenous population is younger than the non-indigenous population.⁵⁵

Internet use is also much lower amongst indigenous people in NSW. Only 18.6 per cent of indigenous women report that they use the internet. This compares to 36.6 per cent of non-indigenous women, and 40 per cent of non-indigenous men. Indigenous men are the least likely to use the internet, with only 16.9 per cent doing so.⁵⁶

NSW Government commitments to Aboriginal People

NSW has led the country in many aspects of its response to Aboriginal affairs and Reconciliation. With initiatives such as the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, the Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal People and the Aboriginal Community Development Program, we are striving to ensure Aboriginal people and communities have quality education and training, employment, better health and living conditions, support for their culture and heritage, and that improvements are lasting. Fundamental to our efforts has been our recognition of the special position Aboriginal people have in NSW as Indigenous people and our commitment to work towards a society which treats everyone with fairness and equity.⁵⁷

In 1992 the Council of Australian Governments (made up of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments with the Australian Local Government Association) endorsed the *National Commitment to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Programs and Services to Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders*. The *National Commitment* provides a framework for inter-governmental co-operation.

The NSW Government, on behalf of the people of this state, has begun the process of genuine recognition of the truth of Australia's history, and addressing the disadvantage that Aboriginal people continue to face today.

On 14 November 1996, the Premier of NSW, Bob Carr, became the first head of an Australian government to respond to the call from the Governor General for all parliaments to reaffirm their commitment to reconciliation. In his speech to parliament, the Premier said: 'If there is to be reconciliation

with justice, there must be an acknowledgement of a great wrong.' In June 1997, the NSW Parliament was the first Australian Parliament to apologise formally to Aboriginal people for the Stolen Generations.

Also in 1997, the NSW Government launched its *Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal People*. This *Statement of Commitment* acknowledges the great wrong committed against Aboriginal people and their survival against all the odds.⁵⁸ It honours Aboriginal people's resilience and their emergence as a strong and vibrant community. With this *Statement of Commitment*, the Government accepts the challenge to build a partnership based on justice, equality and respect.⁵⁹

The NSW Government recognises Aboriginal people's desire to enjoy the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities as all Australians, while also recognising their unique position as indigenous people.⁶⁰ The Government is committed to redressing disadvantage and to implementing social justice initiatives in partnership with Aboriginal people.⁶¹

The NSW Public Sector has also begun to embrace the process and practices of Reconciliation. Chief Executives of all NSW Public Sector agencies have made a joint *Statement of Commitment to Reconciliation*.⁶² This acknowledges Australia's true history, apologises for damage done by previous government policies and practices and commits Chief Executives to working with Aboriginal Australians to address disadvantage. Many agencies carry out a range of Reconciliation activities, in partnership with Aboriginal communities. Individuals and work units are also involved. Some ways people have carried out Reconciliation in their workplaces have included: inviting members of local Aboriginal communities to

speak; forming study circles; distributing information; acknowledging traditional land owners as part of meeting protocols; building better relations with Aboriginal staff and local communities; and challenging racist attitudes.⁶³

Following the formal end of the Reconciliation process, the NSW Government is setting new standards of accountability for government agencies in improving education, health and economic status of Aboriginal people. The Government's Plan, *Partnerships – A New Way of Doing Business*, will strongly focus on Aboriginal leadership and economic independence. The Plan will demonstrate the Government's commitment to working with local leadership for local solutions. Aboriginal communities will play a key role in developing and implementing the plan. The NSW Government recognises the important role Aboriginal women play in their communities as leaders, as workers, and in supporting and caring for their families.

What we are doing

FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Recognising future community leaders

Yarn Up 2: Growing up our leaders attracted over 600 seniors and young Aboriginal people, predominately women, in Wollongong in June 2002. It was presented by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in partnership with the Department of Ageing, Disability and Homecare, the NSW Reconciliation Council, the Premier's Department, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.⁶⁴

At the first *Aboriginal Seniors Yarn Up* in May 2000, participants stated that one of the most important issues for many seniors is their love and concern for young people. Equally, participants

recognised that young people need to be listened to and given the opportunity to learn from the wisdom of older people and the richness of their culture. *Yarn Up 2* brought together Aboriginal seniors and young people to exchange information, and create support/guidance networks between old and young Aboriginal community members. *Yarn Up 2* had a number of workshops, enabling Aboriginal people to talk about their concerns and give advice on how the issues could be addressed. The workshops covered: capacity building, working with government and the media, getting into politics, starting a business, turning Community Development Employment Programs into businesses, mental health, family violence and dealing with community factionalism. The *Yarn Up 2* report will be available on the Department of Aboriginal Affairs website (www.daa.nsw.gov.au). A free video of *Yarn Up 2* has been produced, which is also available from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

Aboriginal women are actively building their communities

By providing community grants, government agencies support local communities to develop and undertake projects that will benefit the Aboriginal community. The projects often have long term outcomes to enable ongoing involvement of Aboriginal women in political, social and economic decision-making in their indigenous and non-indigenous communities. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs has a community grants program that has funded projects targeting women. For example, during the financial year 2001–2002, a one-off sum of \$40,163 has been allocated to a program specifically targeting Aboriginal girls between the ages of 11 and 15 years in the Walgett region. The funds were used to set up four three day camping excursions to provide a supportive environment to enable girls to talk about their lives and needs. The project offers the Aboriginal girls skills

to help prevent sexual assault and family violence and encourage cultural healing.

There are two types of grants. Discretionary grants (up to \$4,000) are available throughout the year to alleviate social disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal women, men, children and elders. Larger grants (up to \$45,000) are available for projects delivering long-term benefits to Aboriginal people. Preference is given to projects submitted by Aboriginal individuals and Aboriginal organisations, and those that have a state-wide or regional focus, are sustainable and/or involve partnerships with other community, corporate and/or government agencies. In 2001/2002 major grants were available for programs focusing on language, culture and heritage as well as prevention of sexual assault and family violence.

The Department for Women seeks to achieve safe, inclusive, participatory and economically developed communities in which Aboriginal women are full and equal participants and leaders in sustainable communities. Several projects contribute to this goal. The Department for Women provided a grant of \$37,500 to the Boomerang Meeting Place Incorporated to run an Indigenous Women's Outreach Network in Batemans Bay. Aboriginal women participants will be able to access training on running committees, goal setting, motivation, and basic management skills. Course content will also cover issues such as domestic violence, parenting skills, health, nutrition and fitness. The project will identify service needs for local Aboriginal women, offer service information days and establish a referrals network. The Network will develop clear links with community elders to tap into their knowledge of women's business and spiritual teachings. In this way the project promotes and develops Aboriginal women's cultural pride, confidence and self esteem.

Ongoing structures will be Aboriginal Women's Self Advocacy/Consultative forums and an Aboriginal Women's Creative Arts and Performance Troupe.

The Northern Star Aboriginal Corporation in Brewarrina has been working on a successful community project called *Images of Murdi Women in Bre'*. This project collected and collated photographic images of Aboriginal women in Brewarrina by working with six Community Development Employment participants. The project received \$61,983 funding through the annual *Women's Grants Program* from the Department for Women.

Women over 25 years involved in the 10–12 month project received training in photography, developing creative skills, working collaboratively with a team of photographers, and culminating in an exhibition. The final photographic exhibition *Mukatinj Ngari* (meaning Women: now in time, here in place) was held from 3–17 October 2002 at Brewarrina's local gallery and the photographs will also be exhibited during NAIDOC week. The community photographic archive will also be extended and the opportunity to create a small business developed.

Clarence Valley Community Programs Incorporated received a grant of \$62,150 to run a *Young Women's Project*. The project focuses on young Aboriginal women aged between 12 and 18 years in Clarence Valley. A group of older women across seven communities will be trained to lead small groups of young women through an educative process covering budgeting and money matters, communication, police issues, the emotional costs of early motherhood, leadership and employment issues.

The training will be delivered to the group leaders by

professional staff from local services including Northern Rivers Area Health Service, the Aboriginal Medical Service, and Clarence Valley Community Programs Inc. The project will work with an Aboriginal Reference Group of Elders from seven communities to enhance the relationships between young women and their communities.

In 1999 the Department for Women worked in partnership with Aboriginal women on the Kempsey Community Economic Renewal Project (KCERP). During this project Aboriginal women identified the need for culturally appropriate training to develop the skills and confidence to manage their own enterprises. The Guri Wa Ngundagar Aboriginal Corporation (GWNAC) has now been funded for \$20,000 through the 2001 *Women's Grants Program* to work in partnership with Aboriginal community organisations and Aboriginal women to develop and pilot an appropriate training program. A mentoring program, women's network and social/economic renewal structures will be developed to provide ongoing support to Aboriginal women.

The project is focusing on two groups of Aboriginal women, those who already hold leadership positions, and those who are not involved in community leadership activities or in the workforce and face significant barriers to participation. The first group includes the members of the Steering Committee who wish to be involved in the training of the second group of women, but who require culturally appropriate training to be able to take up roles as mentors and trainers.

In Dareton, a partnership was established between the Dareton Aboriginal Women's Network (*DAWN*), the Department for Women and UTS Shopfront. The Dareton Aboriginal Women's Network develops proposals for economic and cultural development projects, raises issues impacting on the well being

of Aboriginal women in the community, and identifies pathways to enterprise development, training and building sustainable outcomes for women and the community. The Department for Women allocated \$7,000 for a twelve-month training and mentoring program for members of *DAWN* to build on their skills and knowledge in organisational management and leadership. The project is an example of work being carried out under the Coalition of Australian Governments' priorities for Aboriginal women, on women in leadership and women's economic status.

Better support for Koori carers – Koori Carers Yarning Project

To increase awareness among local service providers about the emotional support needs of Koori carers and to existing counselling agencies about personal and practical issues facing Koori carers, the 2000/2001 *Women's Grants Program* funded a camp for Koori carers and service providers (\$53,540) Forty seven service providers and 12 Koori women carers came together in two camp settings over two days—one at the Yarrawarra Aboriginal Corporation in the Mid North Coast area and the other at the Boorambola Sport and Recreation Centre in the South West region of NSW.

The camps increased Koori women's knowledge of available services to meet their caring needs. Service providers became aware of how to be more culturally responsive to Koori women's needs and to access Koori carers better. These strategies and the information about Koori carers' needs have been incorporated into a training manual for service providers. The manual also provides an evaluation report and information for other service providers to set up Koori yarning camps within their area.

Through continued work in partnership, it is expected that outcomes of the project will include:

- ◆ increased confidence among and refining the skills of Aboriginal women to manage their own projects and organisations;
- ◆ a training program will be established including skill development in arts and cultural production; and
- ◆ enhanced capacity for representation in local decision-making, planning and program development.

Delivering culturally appropriate solutions to community needs

Government agencies also work in partnership with Aboriginal communities to address current needs. For example, poor nutrition has been identified as a significant problem for Aboriginal families. In the Central Western region of NSW, NSW Health service representatives and community members developed the *Feeding the Family Program* in Coonamble where it has been running successfully for some time. A need was identified in Coonabarabran for a similar program and a pilot was developed following a review and rewrite by the Coonamble team. The six week program is for young Aboriginal parents and is comprehensive, involving teaching of skills related to budgeting, shopping, cooking, kitchen hygiene and nutrition to the target group who may not have learnt these skills before becoming parents.

The course has been run a number of times in Coonabarabran where two local high schools offered their kitchens for use by the Health Service for free. The first program was conducted with five participants at a local high school kitchen and was delivered by a local chef/ TAFE teacher, assisted by an

Aboriginal Health Education Officer. Such was the success of the first program that two extension programs have since been conducted with eight participants in each and more on a waiting list. Young men are included in the program to encourage positive role modeling in the community. Costs have been kept to a minimum being \$1,800–\$2,000 per program for food and chef / teacher hours.

Addressing Aboriginal women's housing needs

Aboriginal people have the highest level of relative housing need in our community. Nearly one third of NSW Aboriginal households rely on social housing as their only tenure option.⁶⁵ A high reliance on public housing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities may be explained by a number of factors, including significant levels of racial discrimination in the private rental sector. The Anti-Discrimination Board advises that most of the race complaints are from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people against real estate agents rather than against landlords.⁶⁶

The Office of Community Housing (Department of Housing) funds long term affordable housing for people on low incomes by providing funds and resources to not-for-profit organisations to be direct housing providers. The office leases properties to housing providers who rent them to people on low incomes and other people unable to access appropriate housing in the private market. The office also provides recurrent grants to housing providers for the same purpose.

In 2002, two housing providers were funded under the Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) to provide housing specifically to women. The Women's Housing Company, a community housing association specialising in

The Aboriginal Housing Office is a statutory authority governed by an Aboriginal board. The Office was established in 1998 to ensure that Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders have access to affordable, quality housing that is appropriate to their social and cultural requirements, living patterns and preferences. The Office makes it possible for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders to be involved in determining, developing and delivering policies and programs relating to Aboriginal housing.

The Office ensures that priority is given to those individuals most in need and that registered Aboriginal housing organisations are accountable, effective and skilled in the delivery of Aboriginal housing programs and services.

Following a series of projects, the range of housing choices for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders should be increased to reflect the diversity of individual and community needs. Certain programs, like the Aboriginal builders program, will encourage the sustainable employment of indigenous people in the housing assistance sector.

There are *Regional Aboriginal Housing Committees* based on the ATSIC regions of Sydney, South Eastern, Kamilaroi, Many Rivers, Binaal Billa and Murdi Paaki. A housing committee is appointed in each region to advise the Aboriginal Housing Office board on local issues including homelessness and regional housing programs.⁶⁷

housing for single women, was allocated the management of a further five leases and thirty-one properties on redevelopment sites for general community housing. The company has a record of managing 234 capital properties owned by the NSW Land and Housing Corporation including a number that

are leased (108 short term leases and nine long term leases) in metropolitan Sydney as part of the Community Housing Leasing Program. Western Suburbs Community Housing was also allocated 2 properties on redevelopment sites to provide supported housing for single young parent families with complex needs, in partnership with Anglicare Youth Services.

The *Crisis Accommodation Program*, coordinated by the Office of Community Housing, is of particular importance to women during periods of considerable upheaval, such as domestic violence or during bouts of homelessness. Funds from the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement are managed by the Office of Community Housing to acquire, build, lease, renovate and convert properties for people seeking crisis accommodation. The accommodation is managed by not-for-profit organisations on behalf of the NSW Government. In 2001/2002, forty six properties (or 40 per cent of the total 2001/2002 Program supply) were allocated to community based housing and/or support providers who specialise in providing services for women. Of these properties, eight were allocated for crisis accommodation, 25 for exit and transitional accommodation, eleven replaced unsuitable properties, two properties were approved for reconfiguration and a feasibility study was approved for the future replacement or reconfiguration of one property. 29 properties were in the Sydney Metropolitan area, three in regional and 14 in rural New South Wales.

The Department of Community Services (<http://www.community.nsw.gov.au>) administers the Commonwealth/State Supported *Accommodation Assistance Program*⁶⁸ to assist women escaping domestic violence and their accompanying children, single women, young women and women with children/families experiencing or, at risk of,

homelessness and in crisis. The Department is providing \$36.25 million in 2002/03 to 144 agencies to assist women and their children escaping domestic violence and single women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. An estimated 11,550 women were assisted in 1999/2000. These agencies provide a range of support services, including emergency and longer term accommodation, counselling, general support and advocacy, referrals to specialist services, domestic violence support, linkages to income support and education, training and employment services, child care and liaison with kindergartens and schools.

Of the people using *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program* (SAAP) services nationally, 54 per cent were women. Aboriginal women were disproportionately represented in the SAAP population. Aboriginal people constitute 2 per cent of the general population yet 19 per cent of women using SAAP services in 1999–2000 were Aboriginal. Aboriginal men are also over-represented in SAAP services at a level of 9 per cent of users.⁶⁹ Indigenous people re-use SAAP services at last three times before securing long term accommodation.⁷⁰

The *Partnership Against Homelessness* is a group of government agencies working together to prevent homelessness and improve services for people who are homeless. In March 2002, the *Partnership* adopted a reference paper on *Women and homelessness* developed by the Department for Women. The reference paper outlines how women's experiences of homelessness, needs and therefore solutions differ from those of homeless men. Women are a significant proportion of homeless people in New South Wales—8,053 women were estimated homeless on census night in 1996, 32.7 per cent of the people counted as homeless. 83 per cent of these women were

sleeping in public places, staying temporarily in other households or in crisis accommodation.⁷¹

The reference paper reported that women experiencing homelessness are more likely to be sexually or physically assaulted than homeless men. They often have child care responsibilities, mental health concerns, or are dealing with domestic violence issues.

Older Aboriginal women who do not have their own housing rely on living with family and kin. In turn, they provide a range of unpaid labour and services, particularly child care and assisting in the local schools. For many families, particularly Aboriginal families, overcrowding is commonplace and detrimental to the health and wellbeing of its members.⁷² Women also reported feeling unsafe but without options to live elsewhere.

The next stage of the *Women and homelessness* project involves developing a number of case studies showing illustrating how an understanding of the differences between men and women can improve service delivery. The first case study examines the development of the Inner City Homelessness Action Plan, starting with the development of an outreach service for women and men sleeping in public places. The project will gather informative data about women using the outreach service, helping to increase understanding of the differences between indigenous and non-indigenous women.

The Department of Juvenile Justice and the Department for Women are planning a joint project to improve services for young Aboriginal women leaving detention. The project will examine ways to:

- ♦ reduce the rate of homelessness among young Aboriginal women leaving juvenile detention and prison;

- ◆ reduce recidivism by increasing accommodation on release from detention centres and prisons;
- ◆ expand and support the community service orders system;
- ◆ aid reintegration for young Aboriginal women and improving case management services and post-release support; and
- ◆ provide an additional diversionary option for young women as an alternative to custody.

Initially the project will identify the number and range of existing services (provided by both Department of Juvenile Justice and other agencies) for young Aboriginal women leaving detention. Existing gaps in services and areas of unmet need will be identified. The lack of accommodation options available to young women is significant during remand and when exiting custody. This project will identify barriers to accommodation and ways to reduce bouts of homelessness for young women who are risk.

This initiative is included in the *Juvenile Justice Girls' and Young Women's Action Plan 2001–2004*. The *Action Plan* is a Department of Juvenile Justice document which guides policy directions and includes key response areas in relation to girls and young women. This project will go ahead once the results of the Accommodation Review and a *Post Release Support Program* pilot are available.

Many young Aboriginal women who are clients of the Department of Juvenile Justice have experienced unstable accommodation for long periods and lack the necessary living and social skills to maintain independent accommodation. These issues are being addressed by an *Accommodation Review* being conducted in 2002 by the Department of Juvenile Justice with the assistance of the Department of Community Services. The review will provide information to help the Department determine the

best types of accommodation support for juvenile justice clients. It will identify the accommodation support needs of young people in detention from 2002 to 2007. The review will consider the roles of both the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Department of Community Services with regard to accommodation services, and explore the relationships with a range of youth accommodation providers in NSW.

Recognising that information is a valuable resource

The Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales provided information to Aboriginal women, young people and communities through a series of information and education sessions. Training was delivered to 20 indigenous groups, reaching up to 800 people. Overall the majority of participants in the training and education sessions were women. Issues covered included anti-discrimination laws protecting carers, pregnant women and lesbians from discrimination, as well as information about what sexual harassment is and how to deal with it. The Anti-Discrimination Board worked with local Aboriginal communities to find appropriate events at which to offer information. For example, a significant number of Aboriginal people were reached by setting up a stall at the Lloyd MacDermott Rugby Union Tournament in Bathurst, an indigenous event that draws people from areas beyond Bathurst.

Information about government and community services is another important resource for women. There has been a limited amount of research, however, on how women seek and use information. The *Women's Information Needs Project* investigated women's information needs and information seeking behaviours, particularly in relation to government provided information. Aboriginal women's information needs were examined as part of this research project.

Aboriginal Women's Business Unit

The Department for Women is establishing a new Aboriginal Women's Business Unit with four staff in the Department for Women, together with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Reference Group.

The Aboriginal Women's Business Unit will provide:

- ◆ a central point of reference within NSW government on matters relating to Aboriginal women's issues;
- ◆ consistency in policy affecting the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in NSW;
- ◆ a mechanism for coordination regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's initiatives, including those managed through the agency; and
- ◆ the basis for developing a Memorandum of Understanding between the NSW Department for Women and the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

The Unit will be concerned with a comprehensive consideration of issues affecting the status and well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, including social justice; the cultural, community and spiritual well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their communities; leadership; criminal justice; violence (including sexual assault); and young people's affairs (including child protection).

The proposal will directly assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women by providing a focal point for whole of government and agency responses to improving the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The Unit will provide policy advice on issues impacting on the well-being of Aboriginal women; support and contribute to project development, and support women in communities through community development and education; and contribute to whole of community and whole of government planning for improved and accessible service delivery.

The Unit is committed to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women throughout NSW, in particular those in remote and regional communities that experience considerable isolation and lack of access to services and support mechanisms. The Unit includes a community development/education position. This position will work extensively with women in remote and regional communities.

The DFW is also planning to establish and support an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Reference Group, with representatives from across the State. The Reference Group will provide a mechanism for regular twice yearly consultation and dialogue with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from remote, rural, regional and metropolitan communities.

Phase one of this research project, funded by the Commonwealth/State/Territories Ministers' Conference on the Status of Women's Activities Trust Fund and managed by the Department for Women, involved conducting national telephone polls and a series of face-to-face interviews with targeted groups of women. Phase two of the project involved interviews with government agencies to investigate how they provide information to women. The findings of the project point out possible and preferred information pathways for women wanting government information. The recommendations particularly focus on information gathered from disadvantaged women, including Aboriginal women, Maori women, women from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

To mark 2002 as the Year of the Outback, NSW Agriculture is producing the Year of the Outback Book—a coffee table style book featuring stories and images of people living in outback NSW focusing on areas around Bourke, Cobar and Broken Hill. Indigenous women are among the many participants whose valuable contributions and achievements will be recognised in the book, to be launched later in 2002.

Education and training

CREATING TAFE PATHWAYS FOR ABORIGINAL GIRLS AND WOMEN

The government is committed to developing more accessible, and more customised education and training services for Aboriginal women. Women-only courses at TAFE are a specific pathway assisting women into vocational education and training qualifications. Women in these courses develop the skills and confidence required for entry or re-entry into the workforce or further education. The *Work Opportunities for*

Women Statement of Attainment and the *Career Education and Employment for Women Certificate II* course were reviewed and redesigned in 1999 and TAFE institutes began offering the new courses to students from Semester 2, 2000. Aboriginal women are a specific target group for the *Work Opportunities for Women* courses.

The fee-exempt status of the *Work Opportunities for Women Statement of Attainment* courses is a concrete support for women students. Other ways women students' needs are taken into account include flexible timetabling (especially around school hours), flexible venues, distance education and work placements. A range of these courses are offered every year, in areas such as computing, Child Studies, Small Business and Primary Industries Horticulture, Information Technology, Electro-technology and Children's Services.

Indigenous women are one of the target populations that will be able to access an information session about *Work Wise Women*, the Certificate IV, IT (Client Support) course. The information session will be conducted for women and girls who are participating in lower level qualification TAFE courses.

TAFE is also working to provide courses for Aboriginal women specifically. For example, the *Women's Business: Certificate 1 in Information Technology for Aboriginal Women* course gives Aboriginal women the chance to study IT in a culturally appropriate context, extending their employment options into this employment sector.

TAFE NSW *Strategic Directions for Women 2001–2002* identifies the use of new technologies and delivery options as one way of meeting the diverse needs of women. The Department of Education and Training will conduct a \$25,000 research project

into the accessibility of online learning for women in Vocational Education and Training (VET), in particular Aboriginal women. The research explores women's on-line learning needs and identifies barriers preventing them from using such resources. It will provide an information base for future planning, development and implementation of appropriate and effective on-line materials and on-line learning strategies for women.

The *Regional Extended Family Services (Pathways for Indigenous people in VET)* project is addressing a number of indigenous training needs, including appropriate vocational education and training opportunities to increase local Aboriginal consultancy expertise. The project is working with indigenous communities and local Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) to establish educational training programs, improve skills development and generate community enterprise initiative. One outcome has been the establishment of the *Certificate IV in Planning and Management* with a focus on indigenous content and delivery. Indigenous women will benefit from the project by participating in education and small business enterprise.

The government acknowledges the comparatively low retention and completion rates of indigenous people in schools and VET programs. This is reflected in low participation in private enterprise and high levels of unemployment. The Department of Education and Training is responding to these issues by targeting the indigenous community in the New England area with two demonstration projects, funded for \$300,000 in 2001–2002. The first program involves the support of indigenous employment and business ventures, through the establishment of educational training programs based in Armidale. The initiative involves indigenous communities, including women, and Community Development Employment Projects to improve skills development

and generate community enterprise initiatives. The initiative addresses training needs, including appropriate vocational education and training opportunities to increase local Aboriginal consultancy expertise.

The second initiative aims to address the under-representation of women of Aboriginal background in vocational education and training courses, particularly at higher qualification award levels. 111 Aboriginal women of various ages in the New England Region will be surveyed by TAFE NSW – New England Institute to find out the best way to promote training pathways from the Community Development Employment Program to TAFE NSW in the New England Region. The survey will also identify relevant industry areas of interest to the women surveyed, which will be highlighted in promotional material to be developed as a course outcome.

One of the aims of the government's *Aboriginal Education Policy* is to increase the number of qualified Aboriginal Education Assistants in schools as well as providing further career opportunities for them. The Department of Education is providing opportunities for Aboriginal Education Assistants to access further study by offering the *Australian Qualifications Framework, Certificate III – Aboriginal Education Assistants*. Of the 65 Aboriginal Education Assistants who commenced recent training, 56 were women. Thirty two of the 56 women have now completed their training and achieved the Certificate III.

A partnership to increase Aboriginal women's success in higher qualification courses at TAFE

The *Aboriginal women into higher awards* collaborative project is developing a model to assist Aboriginal women to undertake vocational courses that deliver higher level qualifications. This collaborative initiative between TAFE NSW – South Western Sydney Institute, Tharawal Aboriginal Land Council and the Aboriginal Programs and Department of Education and Training Gender Equity Units is in response to the under-representation of Aboriginal women in higher qualification award level courses in TAFE NSW and the VET sector. Based on consultation and collaboration with the land council, the course will be promoted to Aboriginal women and the flexible delivery aspect of the *Focus on Skills* course emphasized. A number of participants from this course have since enrolled in a Certificate IV *Small Business Enterprise Management* course. A project report has been produced which includes a model outlining the key success factors. The model will be distributed to other VET providers and land councils upon endorsement by the Australian National Training Authority, the funding body which provided \$40 000. An expected outcome of this project is an increase in the number of Aboriginal women undertaking higher qualification award level VET courses, which will in turn benefit community development programs.

The *Explore Your Future* initiative is a taster day of IT based activities for girls from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds in Years 9 to 11. The aim of this TAFE NSW – Illawarra Institute initiative is to provide the opportunity for young women to explore the diversity and challenges of the IT industry and IT training. Girls are exposed to the capabilities

of computers, and women from the IT industry will discuss their professional experiences and the diversity of opportunities in the industry. A program kit will be developed to assist other TAFE NSW institutes to implement similar programs. The initiative addresses the decline in the proportion of young women undertaking IT subjects in schools and TAFE NSW.

NSW Agriculture's Year of the Outback women's overseas study scholarships are offered to encourage women living in Western NSW to undertake a short-term study trip aimed at furthering their knowledge and ability to better contribute to their community. The scholarships are valued at \$10,000 each and are for women including Aboriginal women, women from low socio-economic backgrounds and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The target group is women who may not otherwise have had an opportunity to travel overseas to undertake a short-term study trip.

DEVELOPING CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE TRAINING MATERIALS

The *Training Package Equity Evaluation* being undertaken by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) assesses whether training packages used by industry are gender and culturally inclusive and whether they take into account the needs of people with disability, indigenous people and the diversity within these populations. The need for this equity evaluation arose from recognition of the fact that ANTA policies and strategies along with legislative policies, place a responsibility on industry training package developers to ensure that social and physical barriers are removed. There has been little formal input from specific equity groups in the development of industry based training packages. Recommendations made in this report help pave the way for equitable participation for people from

diverse backgrounds (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disabilities, women, people from a language background other than English, youth and people from low socio-economic backgrounds).

TAFE NSW has developed a *Support Provision for Women's Skills Recognition* program to review and develop resources to help women identify and link their skills to training, work and career choices. To date a resource called *Women's Skills = Skilled Women: A resource guide for assessing and valuing skills and making career and employment choices* has been evaluated using staff surveys and student focus groups. This information will be used to customise new resources for specific groups of women such as Aboriginal women and young women. The resources will be available in a number of formats, including the internet, to reach as many women as possible.

A resource is being developed for teachers of the *Career Education and Employment* course for women to help them develop culturally appropriate teaching materials. The resource will use input from teachers, Aboriginal women and students. In the second semester of 2002, teachers will pilot the resource.

Work

Indigenous women in NSW have a lower workforce participation rate (33.1 per cent in 1996) than indigenous men and lower than NSW women in general.

ENSURING SUPPORTIVE EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURES EXIST

The *Working Women's Centre* has developed a booklet providing basic information on sound employment practices for community organisations, highlighting issues such as industrial awards and agreements, recruitment of staff, EEO and discrimination, OH&S and family-friendly work practices. The project was funded by the Department for Women's *Women's Grants Program*.

Indigenous people are over-represented in lower paid and temporary positions in the public sector. The Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment (ODEOPE) coordinates the *Employment and Career Development Program*, which gives indigenous people the opportunity to gain tertiary qualifications and enter careers in the public service, thus providing the service with qualified indigenous people to fill policy, professional service delivery and leadership roles. This five-year partnership between Premier's Department and the federal Departments of Employment and Workplace Relations, and Education, Science and Training, funded with \$1.3 million from DEWR, has a target of 100 cadetships in its first 3 years. Of the 30 first round recruits to cadetship positions in NSW Government agencies, 40 per cent are women. In 2003, the program will cover technical as well as professional occupations,

and 30 more cadetships will be available. Further details are available on ODEOPE's website www.eeo.nsw.gov.au.

As part of the NSW Government's *Small Business Program*, the Department of State and Regional Development introduced the *Indigenous Business Advisory Service* in November 2001. The service gives free business guidance and access to trained business facilitators for Aboriginal people starting a business, or who already own or manage a business. The service is delivered by the Parkes/Forbes Business Enterprise Centre (covering the Binaal Billa and Murdi Paaki ATSIC regions in Western NSW), and by three 'mobile' business development managers employed by the Department, in Sydney, Northern (Ballina) and Southern NSW (Goulburn). More information about the Service is available through www.smallbiz.nsw.gov.au.

In the first quarter of 2002, 46 per cent of all enquiries to the Indigenous Business Advisory Service were from Aboriginal women, and assistance was given to 52 women business operators.⁷³

PILOTING NEW EMPLOYMENT APPROACHES WITH ABORIGINAL WOMEN

The Department for Women is working with *Emerge Australia* in Redfern on a \$100,000 project using Micro Enterprise Development (MED) principles to increase economic development opportunities for women. The Redfern *Micro Enterprise Partnership Project* is piloting the MED approach to determine its applicability in Australian indigenous communities. The project encourages community collaboration and works to build the social capital of the Redfern community through integrating economic and cultural objectives.

Emerge is working with about ten women from Redfern and surrounding areas, providing initial training and mentoring on identifying enterprise possibilities, development of business plans, and skills in implementing and managing their enterprise idea. Participants will receive micro loans to finance the initial stages of operation, and have access to training to build their ability to access and manage credit. A group of five women is working on enterprise ideas, participating in motivation and leadership discussions and learning budgeting and record-keeping skills. Two other Aboriginal women are being helped on an individual basis with their business ideas, including connections to business buddies and possible financial assistance. A library has been established and resource packs of information on issues such as starting a business and GST are being produced. The project is providing valuable information on applicability of the MED model in an urban indigenous community. Initial indications are that such projects work best in the Australian context through adopting a brokerage role, supporting and linking women to existing services and resources for assistance with their business ideas and training needs.

The Department for Women provided funding of \$30,000 to the NSW Dental Assistants Professional Association for the project *Women's access to the workforce through growth and education*. Aboriginal women are one of the three target groups for the project. Women participating in the project completed accredited Certificate Level III training necessary for employment as dental assistants. The project included support and follow-up for participants through telephone and internet services.

The project covered a basic dental assisting course in February 2002 and a two-day infection control workshop in March. The Certificate III training is now underway and due to be completed in December 2002.

Health

DELIVERING BETTER MATERNAL HEALTH OUTCOMES TO ABORIGINAL WOMEN

Improving maternal health for Aboriginal women is the key goal of the *Aboriginal Perinatal Mortality Project, part of the NSW Health Framework for Maternity Services 2000* (www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/babies_pregnancy/).

Aboriginal women generally have poorer health status compared with the overall community. There are more premature and low birth weight infants. The current infant mortality rate for Aboriginal infants is twice that of the non-Aboriginal population. Aboriginal women are also less likely to access antenatal care during pregnancy, have higher rates of birth complications and higher smoking rates during pregnancy.

The poor health of Aboriginal women during pregnancy and their babies is demonstrated by the 2000 Midwives Data Collection that found:

- ◆ Aboriginal perinatal mortality rate is 17.9 per 1,000 (double the non-Aboriginal rate)⁷⁴;
- ◆ low birth weight of Aboriginal babies is 11.9 per cent (double the non-Aboriginal rate);
- ◆ pre-maturity is 11.6 per cent (1.5 times the non-Aboriginal rate)⁷⁵;
- ◆ teenage pregnancy rate is 21.8 per cent (4 times non-Aboriginal rate); and
- ◆ smoking in pregnancy is 60 per cent (3 times the non-Aboriginal rate).

To improve the health of Aboriginal women and their babies, under the *NSW Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Strategy* in six Area Health Services (in the Macquarie (Dubbo), Far West (Broken Hill), Mid North Coast (Taree, Coffs Harbour), Hunter (Newcastle), Mid West (Orange) and New England (Moree) regions) community based outreach programs are being developed to increase Aboriginal women's attendance at antenatal care, improve identification and management of high risk pregnancies and strengthen support for teenage mothers. The Area Health Services have been given recurrent funding of \$1.5 million. Teams of midwives and Aboriginal health workers work together with GPs to provide community based care, outreach services, antenatal and postnatal education and social and emotional support. A training and support program for midwives and Aboriginal health workers is also provided to improve retention and recruitment, particularly in rural and remote areas.

For example, in Wauchope an early childhood health clinic for Aboriginal mothers is available following a *Families First* consultation which confirmed that Aboriginal women in the Wauchope area have not had access to Aboriginal health services or workers, nor do they use mainstream pregnancy services. As there is a growing number of Aboriginal families in the Hastings area, a new service was required. A monthly early childhood clinic is being trialed at the Bunyah Aboriginal Land Council offices to improve access to health care services for Aboriginal women who are pregnant or who have children up to five years of age.

In the first several months of the pilot, the clinic improved access by Aboriginal women to antenatal and early childhood services, such as developmental checks, advice about feeding and infant care, parenting advice and referral to appropriate

medical and social services. An Aboriginal Family Support Worker from Burnside Family Support Service has attended the clinic to assist with liaison and any social or family issues.

In Coffs Harbour and Taree a community midwife and an Aboriginal health worker (from Biripi Aboriginal Medical Service) have been collaborating with medical, obstetric and paediatric staff to deliver a range of community based services for Aboriginal women of child bearing age as well as young Aboriginal women prior to puberty. The services include a community based antenatal clinic, home visiting both antenatally and postnatally, child and family health support and emotional and social support for Aboriginal women who are most vulnerable and 'at risk'. Since July 2001, approximately 80 Aboriginal women, either antenatally or postnatally have accessed the service and a greater number of Aboriginal women are presenting for regular antenatal care earlier in their pregnancy.

NSW Health also provides recurrent funding to the Aboriginal Medical Services which provide a community based outreach service which connects Aboriginal women to maternal, antenatal and postnatal services in:

- ◆ Daruk (Western Sydney) \$106,000;
- ◆ Tharawal \$50,000;
- ◆ Duri \$102,000;
- ◆ Walgett \$102,000;
- ◆ Awabakal \$100,000, and
- ◆ Illawarra \$40,000.

The Department of Transport has funded a *Rural Transport Pilot Project* to provide improved access to transport services for women attending the Aboriginal Maternal Infant Health Strategy (AMIHS) Program in Dubbo. Pre-paid bus tickets will be purchased by the program and given to pregnant women or women with children who might otherwise not attend their health care appointment because of an inability to pay public transport costs. The trial was funded for an initial three month period (July–Sept 2002) by the Department of Transport. AMIHS will then fund the trial for an additional three months, evaluate the results, and make a decision in January 2003 as to whether the project will continue.

To improve the nutritional status of pregnant Aboriginal women and their babies/young children, a workbook, *All You Need to Know about a Healthy Pregnancy for a Healthy Boori*, was produced as a community resource in the Illawarra region. A train the trainer model is used to run a series of cooking programs in 12 Aboriginal communities (four communities each year) across the Northern Rivers health area of NSW. It is the first culturally appropriate maternity resource specifically developed for Aboriginal women in NSW.

The Illawarra Area Health Service received a one off grant to develop an education strategy for early recognition of post natal depression in Aboriginal women. The project also produced public education materials for the Aboriginal community to raise their awareness of the issues. 15 Aboriginal health workers attended a training day to discuss early identification and other related post natal depression issues.

REDUCING CANCER RATES IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Aboriginal women have alarmingly high rates of cervical cancer compared to other women. The Hunter Area Health Service is encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to have regular Pap tests through the production of a video, education sessions in Windale and promotional activity in Muswellbrook. The New England Area Health Service is improving Aboriginal workers' knowledge and skills about cervical screening and has produced an educational booklet and a kit that includes information about Aboriginal women's role in the family, the need to present pap tests in a 'healthy woman' way, the barriers that Aboriginal women face in regard to having a pap test and information about providing explanations for results of pap tests and treatment for abnormal results.

Between 1989 and 1998, the incidence rate for cervical cancer among women aged 20-69 years fell by just over 30 per cent. Death rates fell by 34 per cent in the same period.⁷⁶

The incidence rate of cervical cancer among indigenous women however, is twice that of non-indigenous women while the mortality rate is more than eight times that of non-indigenous women.⁷⁷

Breast cancer prevention is addressed by programs encouraging women to have breast checks and mammography screenings, particularly Aboriginal women. The awareness raising programs are being conducted in the South Eastern Sydney, Central Coast and Mid North Coast Area Health Services.

Aboriginal women and men are a priority group under the NSW Tobacco Action Plan strategy. One example of activities under the plan is the Southern Area Health Service *Aboriginal Women Quit Smoking* project examining why Aboriginal

women find it difficult to quit smoking and remain smoke free. The project will produce gender and culturally appropriate programs for smoking cessation for Aboriginal women in the Shoalhaven region.

CONNECTING ABORIGINAL GIRLS AND WOMEN WITH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The Department of Sport and Recreation's *Active Communities* grant program provides a range of grants and other funding support to community groups for sport and recreation development in NSW.

Targeted programs and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are particularly encouraged, as it is recognized that sport and recreation investment contributes to strong and healthy communities, social justice, reconciliation and community health. Organised sport can also build self esteem, leadership skills, team skills and problem solving—skills which are transportable to employment and community roles.

The participation of indigenous people in departmental programs is relatively high—3.6 per cent of the 300,000 clients who participated in 1999/2000. This overall high level of participation partly reflects the range of specifically targeted programs offered by the Department, and the success of mainstream programs, such as *Outdoor Education, Day Use Sport*, in attracting Aboriginal clients.

The government is committed to improving the health of indigenous women in custody, and has acted on recommendations made at the 1999 NSW Drug Summit by establishing Bolwara House—a new transitional centre for women inmates, particularly Aboriginal women.

Located at Emu Plains, west of Sydney, and built at a cost of \$800,000, Bolwara House opened in May 2002. It has four four-bedroom cottages and an administration building. Bolwara House is a second transitional centre for recidivist women inmates who have significant chronic drug issues. The centre allows up to 25 women at any time to take part in a non-custodial, community based pre-release program to address their alcohol and other drug problems through intensive, culturally appropriate programs and services.

COMMUNITY GRANTS TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S HEALTH

The *Women's Health* component of the Public Health Outcome Funding Agreement (PHOFA) seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of women in NSW with a focus on those at most risk by encouraging the health system to be more responsive to the needs of women. The government acknowledges that the most socially disadvantaged groups, including Aboriginal women, require the highest priority.

The Northern Rivers Area Health Service was funded \$19,000 to conduct an *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Women's Gathering*. This project provides the opportunity for Aboriginal women from various Aboriginal communities to participate in a 2-day camp to sample current women's health screening and health services that are provided in the area. The camp will raise awareness about diabetes and other associated diseases. Aboriginal women will be able to share information on traditional health practices and will meet health professionals working in their area.

The Mid Western Area Health Service was funded \$28,000 for the *Healthy Families Need Healthy Women* Aboriginal Health Peer Education Program. This program will assist in the

development of partnerships between NSW Health, TAFE and Aboriginal communities, in order to enable Aboriginal women become women's health educators in their own communities.

The Southern Area Health Service is funded \$29,000 for the *Rural Women's Health Print Project*. This project will use local artists and local communities to develop a social marketing strategy for a number of major women's health issues. Issues include young women and smoking; Aboriginal women and pregnancy; older women and physical activity. The artworks will be screen printed and launched locally and toured through regional galleries.

The South Eastern Sydney Area Health Service received a grant of \$20,000 to run an *Aboriginal Women's Camp*. This project provides the opportunity for the Aboriginal women from a various Aboriginal communities to participate in a 2-day camp to sample current women's health screening and health services provided in the area. The camp aims to raise awareness about diabetes, cervical cancer and other health issues. Aboriginal women will be able to share information about traditional practices, culture and history. Health Practitioners will be providing services as one of the camp activities.

The Cumberland Women's Health Centre received a grant of \$26,750 to conduct the *Wirawi Bulbwul Aboriginal Women's Wellness Camp*. This project supports the Wirawi Bulbwul Aboriginal Women's Steering Committee to run a two and a half day camp for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The Steering Committee comprises Aboriginal women who live and work in the region, and consequently has strong links to the broader Aboriginal community. Health concerns and improved access to health services will be just two of the many key topics and activities covered during the camp.

Macquarie Area Health Service received one-off funding of \$64,000 in 2000–2001 to conduct *The Strong Women's Project* in Gilgandra. The project is developing a model to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal women. The model uses the principles of capacity building and is based on a social view of health. The overall goal of the project is to decrease the incidence of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer in the Aboriginal population recognising the important role Aboriginal women play in their communities.

Women's Health NSW received \$80,000 to provide a *Women's Health Training Course* for staff working in a non-government organisation women's health settings across the state. The training covers topics including social policy, planning and evaluation and emerging issues in women's health.

Violence

ABORIGINAL WOMEN AND GIRLS HAVE A RIGHT TO LIVE FREE FROM VIOLENCE

High levels of sexual assault and child sexual assault have been the focus of discussions in a substantial number of Aboriginal communities. In response to this, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs convened a meeting of State Ministers in October 2001 to discuss what steps the Government could take. Ministers agreed that *Sexual Violence in Aboriginal Communities Roundtables* be held with representatives from Aboriginal communities, government and non-government organisations to identify issues and possible solutions to this problem. The roundtables produced a number of recommendations, which the Department of Aboriginal Affairs is in the process of implementing. An action plan will be developed to guide the implementation of these recommendations. Implementing the

roundtable recommendations is one way for government and Aboriginal communities to raise community and government awareness of sexual violence in Aboriginal communities and to take steps to:

- ❖ create safe families and communities free from sexual violence;
- ❖ empower communities to take action against sexual violence in ways in which they feel safe; and
- ❖ increase community and government accountability for responding to, and preventing sexual violence in Aboriginal communities.

In 2002, as part of the Premier's Department *Solutions and Crime Prevention Strategy*, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was provided with a grant of \$228,097 to run community education and support activities in response to issues raised at the *Roundtable* discussions. This project will be implemented in Coffs Harbour, Mt Druitt, Bourke and Taree. These locations were chosen on the basis of:

- ❖ their critically high rates of sexual assault;
- ❖ the presence of pro-active community members willing to work with government to address the issue of sexual assault;
- ❖ the presence of supportive infrastructure within which to work;
- ❖ their identification as priority areas for the *Community Solutions Fund*.

The project targets local community members and local agency staff and involves the development of community networks and delivery of training modules in:

- ❖ community education in adult sexual assault and child protection;

- ◆ mentoring; and
- ◆ community development and empowerment.

Rather than training service providers to work with communities, this project also targets community members themselves. Community members will be able to acknowledge the problems of sexual assault and child sexual assault and develop the skills to develop their own solutions in partnership with government.

ADDRESSING ABORIGINAL FAMILY AND COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

The government acknowledges that the severity of family and community violence and sexual assault in Aboriginal communities requires urgent attention. The *NSW Aboriginal Family Health Strategy* was developed in response to these concerns. The *Strategy* was launched in 1995 and is supported by recurrent funding of \$1.2 million annually from the Department of Health. Approximately 20 recurrent programs have been funded through the *Strategy*. These programs are community controlled, culturally specific, and operate within a family health context. They aim to connect Aboriginal families, communities and relevant agencies in partnerships according to communities' needs.

The programs develop strategies to reduce family violence and ensure safety for victims. They also focus more broadly on well-being, and give priority to preventative and follow-up programs. They highlight the importance of educating the community about the long-term cultural, spiritual and political consequences of violence.

In late 2001 the Department for Women, supported by the Attorney-General's Department, commissioned a comprehensive audit of recommendations made by Aboriginal women over the last ten years proposing solutions to the high levels of violence (including sexual assault and child sexual assault) experienced

by Aboriginal women. Titled *Well we went to the government*, this research provides an evidence base to inform government agencies' planning and implementation of violence and sexual assault services and programs for Aboriginal women and children. The research highlights the crucial role of the criminal justice and public health systems with regard to issues of sexual assault in Aboriginal communities.

Issues of violence and sexual assault have in the past proven extremely difficult for both communities and government agencies to address. However, there have been many community consultations and other forums in which Aboriginal women have bravely spoken out about these matters, often at great personal cost. They have also put forward numerous suggestions and recommendations for change. This research will allow these many previous recommendations to be captured and recorded in one place, rather than lost. It will enable communities and government agencies to move forward by exploring positive strategies and solutions.

The government is working to improve the services available to Aboriginal women experiencing violence. In Wellington and Bega, two rural NSW towns, a pilot project started in September 2001 to trial new ways of delivering mainstream services for Aboriginal women. The pilot project will gather information from Aboriginal women about their difficulties accessing services. This information will be passed on to service providers in those areas, possibly leading to a review of staff training, policies and practices to ensure service delivery is satisfactory for Aboriginal women.

The pilot stems from a discussion of barriers faced by Aboriginal women in need of services at a 1998 Lake Burrendong conference on issues for Aboriginal women in rural areas. The

current project is jointly funded by the NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women (\$150,000) and the Department of Community Services (\$75,000). It is co-ordinated through the central office of the Attorney General's Violence Against Women Specialist Unit. The project is also supported by the Aboriginal Justice Strategy and the NSW Aboriginal Family Health Strategy.

Partnerships Against Domestic Violence (PADV) is a Commonwealth Government initiative in partnership with the states and territories, to find better ways of preventing and responding to domestic violence. Under the Commonwealth PADV initiative, the Department for Women and the NSW Attorney General's Department provided project management support for the *Rural Crisis Intervention Projects* at Broken Hill and Menindee. Funding of \$200 000 per annum over two years is provided under this program. The projects provide crisis support to Aboriginal women experiencing family violence.⁷⁸ Community education events were also held for women and children in Broken Hill, Menindee and Wilcannia. The projects produced a model of best practice to address violence within Aboriginal communities, which is described in the report *Community Solutions to Aboriginal Family Violence* available at www.women.nsw.gov.au/publications/publica2.html. More than 110 women have been assisted directly by these projects, many of whom required medical and legal assistance and support, while other women and children have benefited from community education provided by the Aboriginal support workers.

Changes that have happened in the communities include Aboriginal women being able to talk about violence issues openly in their community, which was not possible before the project began. Three young indigenous women who participated in the core domestic violence training produced a video that included

interviews with men and women in the Menindee community about issues relating to family violence. The community has reported that the video would have been impossible before the project began.

\$74,000 has been provided through the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* program to conduct a *Promoting Healthy Relationships Project* for young people in Grafton. Following a review of violence prevention programs for adolescents, a curriculum-based program with gender and race components has been developed and is being piloted with year seven students at a local secondary school. A further three high schools in the Clarence Valley have also expressed interest in piloting some of the modules. By targeting students on entry into high school, the project aims to reach young adolescents before negative patterns in intimate relationships are well established.

This project responds to issues identified by the local Aboriginal community such as an entrenched culture of violence in some schools, attitudes held by young men that lead to violence towards young women, high levels of violence towards Aboriginal young people in local schools, and a lack of awareness in the Clarence Valley of Aboriginal culture. Grafton women's refuge also reported that many of their young Aboriginal women clients believe domestic violence is a 'normal', a culturally acceptable means for men to release anger.

The project offers information to equip young women to deal with a cycle of domestic violence and the intersection of gender and race in that cycle. The project educates young men and women that there is no excuse for violence.

The Department for Women funded *Arts Mid North Coast*

(\$15,650) to run a residential program for ten indigenous women aged 18 to 30 who have experienced addictions and domestic violence. The project is located in the Coffs Harbour area, covering Gumbayngirr Nation in Nambucca and Bellingen. Issues relating to addictions and domestic violence for Aboriginal women are a chronic problem in the region. The need for the interrelated cycle of violence and addictions to be broken has been identified in consultations by government departments and larger non-government organisations.

The five-day residential camp *Garri Darri Doobay*, meaning 'with strong women', used writing and performance based activities, linked to indigenous cultural heritage, to address the identified issues of individual participants. A process of script-writing, video production and performance provided a means of exploring participants' issues and experiences. These skills can be used to produce resources for future educational and community development activities. Feedback from the participants showed an appreciation of the safe environment of the camp and the opportunity to hold follow up supported gatherings. A video was produced from the workshops and is a valuable resource for education and health organisations. A script, *Spirit Guide Dreaming* has also been produced.

COMMUNITY BASED ANTI-VIOLENCE SOLUTIONS AND SUPPORTS

As part of the government's *Indigenous Justice Strategy*, the Attorney General's Department is providing \$1 million of funding over 4 years to support Aboriginal Night Patrols in Brewarrina, Kempsey, Casino, Wilcannia, Mungindi, Bowraville, Wentworth and Campbelltown.

This community based program involves workers targeting Aboriginal people who are 'at risk', removing them from the

street and transporting them to a safe place. Women in Aboriginal communities have often acted as the coordinators and in some cases operators of these projects. The program in Brewarrina, for example, operates a 'Granny Patrol' with respected older women providing mentoring and assistance, typically to young boys and men. The program works to reduce the number of Aboriginal and other community members coming into contact with police and the justice system. It is also expected to achieve a reduction in street violence and injury. The program has been expanded after a successful trial and evaluation in four communities.

Consultations in Aboriginal communities have identified a great need for support for victims and witnesses, particularly women and children, who are passing through the criminal justice process mainly in relation to matters involving personal violence. In response, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has established an indigenous identified Witness Assistance Officer. This officer will provide a specialist service that includes consulting with other Witness Assistance Officers, lawyers and Crown Prosecutors about the issues and needs of Aboriginal victims and witnesses. The Witness Assistance Officer will travel to regional centres to provide personal assistance in relevant matters.

It is expected that many of these victims and witnesses will be women, as they are frequently the victims of violent crime. The Witness Assistance Officer will work closely with Aboriginal communities to ensure appropriate information, referral and support are available for Aboriginal victims of violent crimes who are going to court.

The Department for Women provided a grant of \$20,000 to the Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre for the *Mirrung*

Ngu Wanjarri project. The funding enabled the production of an informative video for use in the court support program. The video explains local court procedures to women who have applied for Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs), specifically including Aboriginal women. It provides information on Local Court defended hearings for AVOs and complements the information provided by the court support workers. The video provides information to allay women's concerns about the court process. As a result, the video is expected to assist more women to take AVOs to completion by helping them to better understand the court process. The video was launched on 24 April 2002 at the Lismore Art Gallery. The grant also financed the broadcasting of a thirty second commercial (already produced by *Mirrung Ngu Wanjarri*) twice a day, at two week intervals for 6 months to inform the Northern Rivers community about AVOs and Domestic Violence Court Support.

The Department for Women has provided a grant for criminal justice system and support agencies in Dubbo to work together to identify and address problems relating to domestic violence services area including gaps in service provision, a lack of awareness of support services, and a lack of co-ordination and effective communication between support agencies and the criminal justice system. These problems contributed to unsatisfactory levels of support for victims, who often suffered repeat victimisation, failed to attend court and resorted to withdrawing protection orders. The project will provide Aboriginal women with increased knowledge of and access to existing services and resources, and increase training opportunities for service providers. As part of this program, Aboriginal women's self advocacy and consultative forums will be held, and a self-managed Aboriginal women's creative arts and performance troupe will be established and self managed.

Justice

KEEPING ABORIGINAL WOMEN IN TOUCH WITH THEIR CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

The Department of Corrective Services is maintaining and establishing regional centres for women prisoners in response to the need for women from rural and regional areas to be accommodated closer to their communities. Prior to this initiative all women were accommodated in the Sydney metropolitan area, resulting in separation from families and communities which has a detrimental effect on prisoners and can impede rehabilitation. The children of women prisoners also suffer when distance and financial restraints make it difficult to visit their mothers in prison and sustain a beneficial relationship.

In January 2002 work commenced on the \$8 million Mid North Coast Women's Correctional Centre, near Kempsey. This centre will accommodate up to 50 women, and will be the first regional centre to accommodate the Department's *Mothers and Children's Program*. The new Centre is expected to commence operation in early 2004. Previous regional centres established for women are the June Baker Unit at Grafton opened in 1996 and a smaller facility for women at Broken Hill opened in 1999. Accommodating a maximum of 19 and 8 women respectively, these centres are for women who are on remand, awaiting court appearances, or serving full time or periodic sentences.

The Department of Corrective Services runs cultural camps, called *Karrka* meaning 'together', for Aboriginal women prisoners as well as to non-Aboriginal women and staff wanting to gain an understanding of Aboriginal culture. Four camps are held annually at Goodooga in Northern NSW, at a total cost of \$66,000. The camps are run by the Goodooga Aboriginal

- ◆ Aboriginal women made up 23.3 per cent of the women inmate population in June 2001, up from 18 per cent in 1994.⁷⁹
- ◆ There are few Aboriginal women serving periodic detention sentences, although this has increased from four in 1994 (4.5 per cent of women participants)⁸⁰ to 11 in 2001 (10.3 per cent).⁸¹
- ◆ In 1999, only 10.8 per cent of women on Probation Orders, 9.5 per cent of women on diversionary programs and 7.7 per cent of women on community service orders were Aboriginal.⁸²

community and involve five full days of extensive Aboriginal cultural learning experiences with evening sessions held around a campfire. All participants are treated as equals whether they are inmates or custodial staff, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. The camps give women skills to choose alternative paths to re-offending, a strategy for reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal women in custody. The program has been evaluated positively.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The Department for Women is conducting the *Diversionary Options for Women Project*. Preliminary research into the diversionary options available for women in the criminal justice system has so far been conducted; during the second phase of the project, the Department will examine the factors that influence the availability and women's take-up rate of these options and work with key government stakeholders to develop innovative approaches aimed at overcoming barriers to women's participation in diversionary programs. Because of the overrepresentation of Aboriginal women in correctional facilities, the project will have particular relevance for Aboriginal women.

As part of the draft *NSW Indigenous Justice Strategy 2001–4*, the Attorney General's Department has conducted qualitative research into the needs of indigenous women in custody. The research examines in detail the experiences of Aboriginal women in prison to identify their health, welfare, legal and educational needs. It also examines reasons why Aboriginal women come into prison, and explores their post release needs. The research consisted of a survey of 50 per cent of the Aboriginal women in prison in NSW. The survey covered a range of topics and follow up interviews were conducted with a small number of women to expand on themes raised during the initial survey. A draft report has been compiled from these interviews entitled *Speak Out Speak Strong: Aboriginal Women in Custody*.

This research makes a number of recommendations intended to assist the government to improve services to Aboriginal women both while in custody and upon their release. It also seeks to develop strategies to prevent Aboriginal women coming into contact with the justice system.

The Newcastle Legal Aid Office has developed a Community Outreach Program and legal education training targeting indigenous women in the Newcastle / Hunter Region, particularly in the Taree area. The program increases women's awareness of legal aid services as well as an understanding of how to contact such services. Between March 2000 and May 2002, the Newcastle Legal Aid Office provided 32 education sessions, providing legal education to 932 women. This program has improved Aboriginal women's access to legal education, information and training, and increased their awareness of legal aid services. As such, this initiative is contributing to an increase in Aboriginal women's access to justice and equality before the law.

Wirringa Baiya is an Aboriginal Women's Legal Resource Centre which provides advice, referrals, legal representation and education to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women about their legal rights, victim's compensation, domestic violence and sexual assault. The centre is located in Marrickville, inner western Sydney and also conducts outreach programs in rural and remote areas. Funding for *Wirringa Baiya* is provided by the NSW government and administered by the Legal Aid Commission, and the centre is managed and staffed by Aboriginal women. *Wirringa Baiya* has provided phone and face to face information and advice to over 1,177 women. The centre has also given Community Legal Education presentations to over 100 rural clients in the Bourke, Walgett and Brewarrina, and delivered discrimination complaint workshops to 90 women. Staff from the service participates in many community initiatives, meetings, media responses and information sessions, in order to promote Aboriginal women and children's issues.

Power, leadership and decision-making

CAPITALISING ON ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP TALENTS

A number of agencies are undertaking initiatives to increase the capacity of Aboriginal women to take up decision-making and leadership roles. The *Women in Decision-Making Boards and Committees Pilot Course* is a new training project undertaken by NSW Agriculture in collaboration with Department for Women, TAFE NSW and the Rural Women's Network. The course is aimed at women with no previous board or committee experience and women with limited experience who would like to find out

more. The course is open to women from rural, regional and remote NSW, with a specific course for indigenous women being held in Orange. At the pilot course 36 women enrolled, including four Aboriginal women who completed the course in Orange. The course focuses on three main areas: gender, roles and responsibilities of board members, and strategies for becoming a board member. It aims to provide women with the knowledge, skills and confidence to put themselves forward for appointment to local boards and committees.

During the Department for Women's *Women on Wheels* tour in far western NSW, Aboriginal women identified a need for skill development in the management and monitoring of community projects, and assistance with developing locally relevant performance standards for services in their communities. The Department has since provided \$100,000 for a *Valuing Women's Voices* partnership project for Aboriginal women in the Murdi Paaki region. *Valuing Women's Voices* offers Aboriginal women skills and knowledge about participating in the political and economic development as well as management of their communities. The project will develop locally relevant course content identifying the strengths of the Aboriginal women of the Murdi Paaki region, their history, and particularly the contribution they made to the pastoral industry. Information provided by Aboriginal women in the local community will be used to produce a culturally appropriate training program which will develop political, service governance and program management skills of Aboriginal women who want to make a difference in their communities in other part of New South Wales.

The CEDAW Promise

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) supports women's choices to participate fully in all spheres of life. It encourages governments to take all appropriate actions to change the social and cultural expectations of men and women that suppress women's ability to participate equitably. Governments that sign the convention are expected to take steps to eliminate sex based prejudices and practices based on the belief that one sex is superior and the other inferior.

Aboriginal women frequently find themselves at an intersection of racial as well as sexual discrimination. The convention provides guidance on ways to improve Aboriginal women's lives by insisting that government agencies are free of discrimination and that they take special measures to remedy discrimination. The convention also supports Aboriginal women's right to political participation, including the right to vote, the right to access education and employment, and the right to have optimal health. Each of these areas needs to be realized in all communities before Aboriginal women can enjoy the same standard of well-being as that of non-Aboriginal women.

List of agencies in this chapter

- ❖ Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- ❖ Department of Housing
- ❖ Office of Community Housing
- ❖ Aboriginal Housing Office
- ❖ Department of Juvenile Justice
- ❖ Department of Community Services
- ❖ Department for Women
- ❖ Department of Corrective Services
- ❖ Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment
- ❖ Department of State and Regional Development
- ❖ Department of Education and Training
- ❖ NSW Health
- ❖ NSW Agriculture
- ❖ Department of Transport
- ❖ Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW
- ❖ Premier's Department
- ❖ Attorney-General's Department
- ❖ Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

- 1 Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (2000) *Overcoming disadvantage*, Canberra, 16–18.
- 2 ABS (2002) *Australian Social Trends 2002*, Cat. 4102.0
- 3 ABS (2001) *Census Basic Community Profile and Snapshot*. The relevant Census question asks whether each person is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.
- 4 ABS, *Census of Population and Housing, Population Distribution, Indigenous Australians*, Cat. 4705.0 Based on place of enumeration. There are two types of census count, 'place of enumeration' (where people were on census night) and 'usual residence' (where people live).
- 5 ABS (2001) *Census Basic Community Profile and Snapshot*.
- 6 ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile*, Cat. 2002.0.
- 7 ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile*, Cat. 2002.0.
- 8 Figures calculated from ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile*, Cat. 2002.0.
- 9 ABS (2001) *Population distribution, Indigenous Australians*, Cat. 4705.0.
- 10 ATSI regions are based on legally prescribed areas for the purposes of administration by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). There are 35 ATSI Regions across Australia. NSW is divided into six regions: Bourke, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga, Coffs Harbour, Sydney and Queanbeyan.
- 11 ABS (2001) *Population distribution, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*, Cat. 4705.0. Figure based on usual residence count. There are two types of census count, 'place of enumeration' (where people were on census night) and 'usual residence' (where people live). Using the usual residence count is preferred in geographical analyses because it corrects for the effect of seasonal fluctuations in holiday/resort areas and, in remote areas, for the effect of visitation and mobility issues and events such as festivals or funerals.
- 12 ABS (2001) *Population distribution, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*, Cat. 4705.0. Based on usual residence count.
- 13 ABS (2001) *Population distribution, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*, Cat. 4705.0. Based on usual residence count.
- 14 ABS (2001) *Population distribution, Indigenous Australians*, Cat. 4705.0.
- 15 Figures calculated from ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile*, Cat. 2002.0
- 16 Figures calculated from ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile*, Cat. 2002.0
- 17 Figures calculated from ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile*, New South Wales, Cat. 2002.0
- 18 Figures calculated from ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile*, Cat. 2002.0
- 19 ABS (2001) *Census, Basic Community Profile and Snapshot*. Cat. 4705.0.
- 20 ABS (2001) *Population Distribution, Indigenous Australians*, Cat. 4705.0
- 21 ABS (2001) *Census, Basic Community Profile and Snapshot*. Cat. 4705.0.
- 22 ABS (2001) *Census, Basic Community Profile and Snapshot*. Cat. 4705.0.
- 23 ABS (2001) *Population distribution, Indigenous Australians*, Cat. 4705.0. These figures are based on place of enumeration counts because comparative data for place of usual residence at this level of geography are not available for 1996.
- 24 Figures calculated from ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile*, Cat. 2002.0. Most of these speakers of indigenous languages are also proficient English speakers.
- 25 ABS (1999) *Australian Housing Survey – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Results*, Cat. 4712.0. For the purposes of the AHS, an Indigenous household was defined as any household which contained at least one person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin aged 15 years or over. The survey excluded people living in remote or sparsely settled areas. The results describe the housing characteristics of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people living in urban and more densely populated rural areas. ABS estimates that in 1999 this covered 82 per cent of Indigenous Australians and 99 per cent of non-Indigenous Australians.
- 26 ABS (1999) *Australian Housing Survey – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Results*, Cat. 4712.0.
- 27 ABS (1999) *Australian Housing Survey – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Results*, Cat. 4712.0.
- 28 Comprising of rent, mortgage repayments, rates, land tax, body corporate fees etc, depending on tenure.
- 29 ABS (1999) *Australian Housing Survey – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Results*, Cat. 4712.0. The survey found 24 per cent of indigenous households reporting a need for essential or urgent exterior or interior repairs compared to 9 per cent of non-indigenous households.
- 30 ABS (1999) *Australian Housing Survey – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Results*, Cat. 4712.0. Overcrowding is defined according to the adequacy of the number of bedrooms for the household's occupants.
- 31 Figures calculated from ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile*, Cat. 2002.0. 'Other families' includes families where the reference person and/or spouse/partner did not state their indigenous status.
- 32 ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile*, Cat. 2002.0.
- 33 Figures calculated from ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile*, Cat. 2002.0.
- 34 Figures calculated from ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile*, New South Wales, Cat. 2002.0.
- 35 Figures calculated from ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile*, New South Wales, Cat. 2002.0.
- 36 Figures calculated from ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile*, Australia, Cat. 2002.0.
- 37 Of indigenous boys and men in NSW, 29.5 per cent reported Year 10 as their highest level of schooling, while 14.9 per cent completed Year 12. Figures calculated from ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile*, New South Wales, Cat. 2002.0.
- 38 The labour force participation rate is the number in the labour force expressed as a percentage of the population aged 15 years and over.
- 39 ABS, 2000, *Labour Force Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians: Experimental Estimates from the Labour Force Survey*, Cat. 6287.0
- 40 Australian Institute of Health, 'Overview of Aboriginal health status in New South Wales', Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health series no 5, prepared for the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.
- 41 ABS (2002) *Australian Social Trends 2002*, Cat. 4102.0.

- 42 Age specific death rates are the number of deaths of persons in a specific age group per 1,000 of the estimated resident population in that age group.
- 43 ABS (2002) *Australian Social Trends 2002*, Cat. 4102.0. This data has some limitations. It is experimental data and does not include deaths in the ACT or Tasmania. There is also unsatisfactory identification of indigenous peoples in some areas.
- 44 ABS (2002) *Australian Social Trends 2002*, Cat. 4102.0. Figures refer to the period 1998–2000.
- 45 Includes ischemic heart disease, stroke and rheumatic heart disease.
- 46 ABS (2002) *Australian Social Trends 2002*, Cat. 4102.0.
- 47 ABS (2002) *Australian Social Trends 2002*, Cat. 4102.0.
- 48 ABS (2002) *Australian Social Trends 2002*, Cat. 4102.0.
- 49 ABS (2002) *Australian Social Trends 2002*, Cat. 4102.0.
- 50 ABS (2002) *Australian Social Trends 2002*, Cat. 4102.0.
- 51 ABS (2002) *Australian Social Trends 2002*, Cat. 4102.0.
- 52 NSW Health (1997) *Report of the NSW Chief Health Officer: the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*, Sydney, chapter 3.1.
- 53 ABS (2002) *Australian Social Trends 2002*, Cat. 4102.0.
- 54 ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile*, New South Wales, Cat. 2002.0. These NSW figures are slightly higher than those for Australia as a whole, where 42 per cent of non-indigenous and 18 per cent of indigenous people use a computer at home. Figures for use and non-use do not total 100 per cent because of a small 'not stated' component.
- 55 ABS 'Census records an increase in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population', media release 17/6/2002, Cat. 2015.0
- 56 Figures calculated from ABS (2001) *Census of Population and Housing, Indigenous Profile, New South Wales*, Cat. 2002.0. Figures represent totals of those reporting internet use, whether at home, work, or elsewhere, or a combination. Figures for use and non-use do not total 100 per cent because of a small 'not stated' component.
- 57 Premier Bob Carr, 1 June 2001, *Partnerships: A New Way of Doing Business with Aboriginal People*, Premier's Department Memorandum No 2001–06.
- 58 NSW Government 1997, *The NSW Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal People*, Sydney, p3.
- 59 Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 'The NSW Government Commitment to Aboriginal People', http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au/daa/media_9.html. Accessed 19 September 2002. Copies of the *Statement of Commitment* can be obtained from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.
- 60 Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 'The NSW Government Commitment to Aboriginal People', www.daa.nsw.gov.au/daa/media_9.html. p 4.
- 61 Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 'The NSW Government Commitment to Aboriginal People', www.daa.nsw.gov.au/daa/media_9.html. p 4–5.
- 62 Statement <http://www.eeo.nsw.gov.au.htm>. (19 September 2002). The Statement was published in the Sydney Morning Herald on 2 June 1999, with the cost of the advertisement being paid for by the Chief Executives personally.
- 63 Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment, 'Reconciliation information for NSW Public Sector employees', ODEOPE website: <http://www.eeo.nsw.gov.au/atsi/fairways.htm>. 17 September 2002.
- 64 Yarn Up 2 was also generously supported by the Aboriginal Housing Office, the Department of Housing, the Legal Aid Commission of NSW, the Department of Sport and Recreation, the Department of Corrective Services, NSW Fire Brigade, the Department of Veteran's Affairs, the Department of Fair Trading, NSW Health, the Environment Protection Authority and the Department of Juvenile Justice.
- 65 Department of Housing (1999) *Direction for Housing Assistance beyond 2000 – Background paper*, Sydney, p 10.
- 66 Johnston, C (1999) *Cash and cowboys – Barriers for entry to private rental by disadvantaged customers*, NCOSS, Sydney.
- 67 Aboriginal Housing Office (2002) Information from website www.aho.nsw.gov.au.
- 68 See also Families and Communities chapter in the *NSW Action Plan for Women*.
- 69 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (1999) *SAAP National Data Collection 1998–99*, Canberra, p 35.
- 70 Aboriginal Housing Office (2002) Homelessness Pilot Project fact sheet.
- 71 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001) *Breakdown of 1996 census data by sex for NSW*, requested by the Department for Women, Sydney.
- 72 National SAAP Data Survey (1998) *Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Context*, 28–35.
- 73 Unpublished data from the Department of State and Regional Development, July 2002.
- 74 Perinatal mortality rates refer to deaths within 28 days of birth of infants weighing at least 400 grams or, if birth weight is not available, at least 20 weeks gestation.
- 75 Public Health Division 2001, *New Mothers and Babies 2000*, NSW Department of Health, pg 10.
- 76 Public Health Division NSW 2000, *The Health of the People of New South Wales – Report of the Chief Health Officer*, NSW Health Department, Sydney, pg 191.
- 77 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2000), *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, Cat. No. 4704.0, Canberra.
- 78 The term 'Aboriginal family and community violence' is preferred to 'domestic violence' by many Aboriginal communities as it encompasses the whole family, and extended family and community networks.
- 79 *NSW Inmate Census 2001*, p4.
- 80 *Women's Action Plan*, p6.
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